



Representatives of the L.A. County Medical Task Force for Safe Prescribing attend a March, 2015 news conference. Pictured (left to right) Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, L.A. County Interim Health Officer, Maureen McCullough, MD, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center Emergency Physician, and Joel D. Hyatt, MD, Community Health Improvement and Emeritus Assistant Medical Director, Kaiser Permanente Southern California Region.

A Message From the Director



I am writing this column from our nation’s capital. I am here in Washington, D.C. with all 5 members of the Board of Supervisors to advocate for issues important to Los Angeles County with our senators, congressional representatives, and federal administration officials. The Board of Supervisors has placed an extension of California’s 1115 Medicaid waiver at the top of their priorities with our federal delegation. The waiver brings hundreds of millions of dollars to the county to provide needed services to our patients. It also grants us greater flexibility in how we provide care so that we can better meet the needs of our patients. The focus of the next waiver is to provide “whole person care”; in others words, to integrate physical health, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other social services so that patients receive the care they need, where and when they need it. We have received a warm reception. Our delegation understands the importance of this program to Los Angeles County and to the patients we serve. The trip is important, but still I can’t wait to get back to Los Angeles. I miss the children. Best wishes.

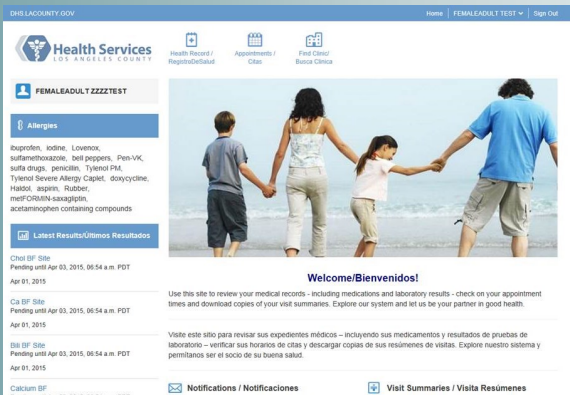
Taskforce Aims to Reduce Opiate Addiction

By Michael Wilson

The U.S. is in the grips of an opiate epidemic. Deaths from prescription drugs have exceeded motor vehicle accidents as a cause of death in young adults and have exceeded the deaths from cocaine and heroin. How we got here is long and complicated, but efforts are being made across the country to help combat this epidemic. Emergency Departments (EDs) across L.A. County are now taking a big step to help curb narcotic abuse by adopting safe prescribing guidelines to reverse what many experts believe is a public health crisis. The Los Angeles County Medical Task Force on Prescription Drug Abuse led by the Departments of Public Health and Health Services in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and other stakeholders officially launched the initiative last month. Emergency Departments across L.A. County are on-board. “About 100 people die from an overdose every single day,” says Maureen McCollough, MD, an emergency department physician at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center and early proponent of prescribing standards. “The

problem is too many patients are prescribed medication, too many get addicted, and too many are dying because of it.” Emergency Departments every day see patients with a variety of pain conditions. Determining if the pain is related to an emergent or chronic health condition can be difficult. “Opiates are highly addictive and abuse is rampant. For those that are addicted or diverting medication to others, the ED can become another place to get a quick fix before visiting the ED down the road the next time.” Emergency Departments across the U.S. have attempted to tackle this problem by adopting safe pain prescribing guidelines. The Taskforce was created last year to establish formal guidelines and all 75 emergency departments in the County were asked for input. The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Joint Commission are supportive of these initiatives across the country. Last July, all 75 emergency departments in L.A. County were provided a 2-month supply of safe pain prescribing patient handouts along with a toolkit

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Patient Portal Puts Health Information at Fingertips

By Michael Wilson

Patients at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center, Hubert Humphrey, and the coastal health centers can now view their medications, lab results, upcoming appointments, and visit summaries online or via mobile app. Over 2,000 patients have requested an invitation to sign up since the March 1 go-live. The MyWellness portal will be rolled out across DHS through early

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that contains statistics on opiate deaths, talking points for patients and hospital administration, and medical literature. A website has also been developed, www.lasafeprescribing.org. Over 95% of the Los Angeles County EDs have adopted the guidelines and are using the patient handouts on a daily basis. Key parts of the new safe pain prescribing guidelines include the emphasis that patients with chronic pain who are prescribed opiates have one provider and one pharmacy. Emergency Departments will no longer refill prescriptions that are lost or stolen. And ED staff are encouraged to use the state prescription drug monitoring program known as CURES to assist in safe pain prescribing practices. These guidelines make the practice of prescribing opiates from the ED safer for all patients. Los Angeles County’s 300 Urgent Care Centers are the next group to bring into the safe prescribing fold. Strategies will include working through local, state and national associations and likely calling the Urgent Care Centers directly. The Urgent Care at Olive View- UCLA Medical Center, for example, has already adopted the guidelines and are using the handout. In addition to the 3 DHS-run hospitals, other

systems adopting the guidelines include UCLA Health, Providence Health & Services, Dignity Health, Memorial Care, Adventist Health, and Daughters of Charity Hospitals.

Key Components of the Safe Pain Prescribing Guidelines:

- Instructing patients to have one provider and one pharmacy for opiate prescriptions for chronic pain
- Avoiding intravenous or injectable opioids in patients already taking opioid meds
- Not replacing "lost" or "stolen" opioid prescriptions
- If opiates are necessary, only prescribing a limited supply
- Using the state’s prescription drug monitoring program to enhance safe prescribing practices

Olive View-UCLA Adopts Sitter Safety Course



To reduce risk of falls, self-harm, and elopements, an Olive View-UCLA Medical Center patient safety team comprised of nursing, psychiatry and education has implemented a sitter safety and retraining course. The safety team looked at root cause analyses of incidents and found improvement areas to address through retraining. The module includes clarification of sitter expectations and retraining in areas such as safety of silverware and meal trays, supervision during bathroom visits, constant versus close observation, and required proximity to patient. All staff have been reoriented on safety and responsibility of one-to-one behavior and the course will be used in future employee orientations. For more information on this and other safety initiatives at Olive View, contact Lisa Martinez, RN at ammartinez@dhs.lacounty.gov.

Harbor-UCLA Program Named Practice of the Year

By Michael Wilson

The Harbor-UCLA Medical Center Family Medicine Residency Program has been awarded “Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Practice of the Year” by the California Academy of Family Physicians (CAFP) for its innovative primary care fellowship program and work on PCMH transformation. The fellowship program designed for recent residency graduates aims to mold future leaders in primary care through advanced training and mentoring with focus on underserved populations, explains Dr. Susan Snyder, director of the Harbor-UCLA Transforming Primary Care Fellowship and associate clinical professor of family medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Fellows take an intensive curriculum combined with on-hands experience leading PCMH teams. “This recognition is a huge validation of our model and our goal to reinvigorate primary care using the talents of every member of the primary care team for the good of the patient. It’s a new and exciting role for the physician as leader, coach and coordinator of a team.” The one-year fellowship in practice transformation is currently the only one in California, but other residency programs have expressed interest in adopting Harbor’s curriculum. With a shortage of primary care doctors in California and financial incentives tied to managing outcomes in outpatient settings, Snyder finds a new energy of innovation, creativity, and team work occurring in primary care that is attracting more post-grads to the field. As the PCMH model grows, Snyder says the metrics will show improved outcomes. “We’re already seeing a huge culture shift where everyone, from business office staff to nurses, residents and faculty are involved in quality improvement efforts that include



Harbor-UCLA fellow Dr. Luz Felix-Garcia receives award from CAFPP Vice President Leah Newkirk on behalf of the program.

engaging patients through structured interviews.” The Harbor-UCLA Residency program has also been recognized by the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC) in a recent PCPCC publication on innovative training models for primary care which can be found at <https://www.pcpcc.org/resource/progress-and-promise-profiles-interprofessional-health-training-deliver-patient-centered>. The PCPCC is a coalition of thought leaders dedicated to transforming the U.S. health care system through delivery reform. For more information on the Harbor-UCLA program, visit <http://transformingprimarycarefellows.org>.

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2016 in tandem with the ORCHID implementation. Patients must have an ORCHID medical record number and valid email address to sign up. Patient portals are a requirement for health systems adopting electronic record systems to meet ‘meaningful use’ criteria for federal funds. They also signal the ubiquitous role of technology in healthcare. Health plans and providers want patients to take a more active role in their personal health, and patients want immediate access to their medical information and the ability to schedule appointments or request prescription refills on their phone. “Healthcare outcomes are improved when patients are actively engaged as partners in their care,” says ORCHID medical director Robert Bart, MD. “The MyWellness portal is a big step in this direction. A patient can go online and review their lab results and doctor notes with ease. In the process, they become better informed as a health consumer and allow the next visit to be more productive.” DHS patients interested in signing up can request an email invitation from a registration clerk in both outpatient and inpatient settings. Once registered, the patient can login from a secure webpage or use a mobile app. In the near future, the portal will include the ability for patients to communicate with their providers, make and change appointments, and access other enhanced features. The DHS website now features a MyWellness landing page (dhs.lacounty.gov/mywellness) with information and video tutorials for patients. Promotional materials, including bilingual waiting room information cards and posters, will be distributed to all upcoming launch sites. The portal will be available to LAC+USC Medical Center, Hudson, Roybal, El Monte, and La Puente Health Center patients after May 29.